

I know each of my colleagues can testify to the important roles military installations play in communities all across our country. My fellow Kentuckians and I take great pride in Fort Campbell, Fort Knox, and the Blue Grass Army Depot. We are proud that Kentucky is home base to many outstanding units, such as the 101st Airborne Division and those of Kentucky's Air and Army National Guard units.

In our State, as in every State, the military's presence anchors entire communities and offers a constant reminder of the sacrifices that keep us safe. It is our responsibility to support them. I look forward to delivering that support when the Senate votes on the NDAA later this week.

WISHING LARRY KUDLOW A SPEEDY RECOVERY

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Madam President, on another matter, I want to share the Senate's warmest wishes for a speedy recovery for Larry Kudlow, the Director of the National Economic Council and Assistant to the President, who is currently recovering at Walter Reed from what we are told was a small heart attack. Larry is not just a famously happy warrior for pro-growth, pro-opportunity economics; he is also widely regarded as really one of the best guys in Washington. We hope he gets well soon.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Madam President, speaking of the economy, by now it is no secret that under the last administration, our Nation's economic recovery was slow, stunted, and almost exclusively focused on the largest urban centers. Between 2010 and 2016, that is where more than 90 percent of the population growth happened; it is where nearly three-quarters of new jobs went. Most everywhere else—in our smaller cities, small towns, and rural areas—families heard a lot of talk about what my Democratic colleagues called an "economic recovery," but they saw few or none of the effects in these small towns and small communities. So it is no surprise that after seeing their communities suffer under 8 years of Democrats' policies, millions of Americans are ready to take a different route. That is why they elected a Republican President and Republican majorities here in Congress. And we set about implementing our agenda to take money and power out of Washington and put it back in the hands of middle-class families and small businesses all across our country.

But even as the positive effects of these policies have become more and more obvious, they continue to encounter near-complete party-line opposition at every turn. I recall that just 2 or 3 days after President Trump signed our historic tax reform into law, several of my colleagues across the aisle were offering some dramatic predictions.

On Christmas Eve last year, the senior Senator from Montana took to the Bozeman Daily Chronicle with a piece titled "Tax bill a disastrous plan, fails Montana and our future." Quite a pronouncement. It reminded me of the Democratic leader of the House. She said our plan to give tax cuts to middle-class families and businesses would bring about "Armageddon." Armageddon.

How are these prognostications holding up? The new Tax Code is causing Northwestern Energy to pass along millions of dollars in savings to Montana utility customers. My friend Senator DAINES recently shared what tax reform already means to Montana small business owners. In Chester, at Stricks Ag, it means bonuses of nearly \$1,000 for each employee. In Missoula, at Big Sky Brewing, it means worker bonuses and money to purchase new equipment. The same goes for Cabinet Mountain Brewing in Libby. Over in Thompson Falls, tax reform gave Thompson River Lumber the breathing room to buy their first new forklift in 19 years.

These are the workers and job creators whom Senator DAINES bet on when he voted for tax reform and helped make all of this possible. He voted for Montanans to send less to the IRS and keep more of their own hard-earned money to save or invest as they see fit. It is too bad their senior Senator took the opposite approach and tried to block these tax cuts from happening, let alone that Democratic leaders in both Chambers now say they will repeal tax reform if they get the chance. But Republicans will keep picking up the slack and will keep standing up for the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 5515, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5515) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2019 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Inhofe/McCain modified amendment No. 2282, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Toomey) amendment No. 2700 (to amendment No. 2282), to require con-

gressional review of certain regulations issued by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

Reed/Warren amendment No. 2756 (to amendment No. 2700), to require the authorization of appropriation of amounts for the development of new or modified nuclear weapons.

Lee amendment No. 2366 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2282), to clarify that an authorization to use military force, a declaration of war, or any similar authority does not authorize the detention without charge or trial of a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING MITCH McCONNELL AS THE LONGEST SERVING SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I begin my remarks, I wish to congratulate our Republican leader on becoming the longest serving Republican leader in the Senate. My friend Leader McCONNELL reached that milestone today.

It is no secret we disagree on a whole lot of issues, both political and philosophical, but that doesn't mean we can't or don't work together or that I don't admire the qualities which help make him the longest serving Republican leader.

He understands his caucus and represents them well. He knows how to fight, and he knows how to cooperate. The job is not an easy one so it is a testament to his qualities that he has done it longer than anyone in the history of the Senate.

TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on North Korea, in the early hours this morning, President Trump and Chairman Kim met in Singapore for the first meeting between a sitting U.S. President and the leader of North Korea. It was a welcome improvement to see the two of them having a dialogue rather than engaging in name-calling and saber-rattling. Certainly, Americans feel better about talking than name-calling and threats of war, which had characterized the relationship up until now.

Though we are all rooting for diplomacy to succeed, we must be clear-eyed about what a diplomatic success with North Korea looks like. A diplomatic success would be the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula—nothing less. Why do we say that? It is not to make any political points, but a nuclear North Korea with ICBMs probably presents a greater danger to the United States and the safety and well-being of

our country than any other in the world. It is imperative that we actually get action here, not just photo ops. Previous negotiations have sought the same goal, with good reason. In 1994 and 2005, those negotiations yielded agreements that were, in fact, much more rigorous than the initial communique issued by President Trump and Chairman Kim. This communique lists denuclearization as a far-off goal but includes no details about a pathway to achieving it; no details about how the United States might verify that North Korea has disarmed when they repeatedly lied in the past; no details about stopping the enrichment of plutonium and uranium; no details even about the definition of complete denuclearization, which has been a main point of contention in previous negotiations.

Unfortunately, the entire document is short on details. As we have learned, in the wake of the collapse of the 1994 and 2005 agreements, North Korea is liable to backtrack on vague commitments as soon as it is in its interest. Chairman Kim, like his father before him, has a history of backing away from agreements. There is a great fear now that Chairman Kim has won a major concession from the United States of a meeting with our President, he may not go any further.

Now, as then, we must be wary of this probability. When trust is lacking, it is best not to dive in headfirst and hope for the best but rather to work slowly, transparently, and verifiably to build trust and lock in concessions. It is worrisome—very worrisome—that this joint statement is so imprecise.

What the United States has gained is vague and unverifiable at best; what North Korea has gained, however, is tangible and lasting. By granting a meeting with Chairman Kim, President Trump has granted a brutal and repressive dictatorship the international legitimacy it long craved. The symbols that were broadcast all over the world last night have lasting consequences for the United States, for North Korea, and the entire region.

For the United States, it is permanent proof that we have legitimized a brutal dictator who has starved his own people. For North Koreans, to have their flags astride those of the United States, it is a clear symbol that they are to be respected and belong among the community of nations, and their sins at home and abroad are beginning to be forgiven. If the United States is unable to win concrete, lasting concessions from North Korea, the meeting alone will be a victory for Kim Jong Un and a defeat for President Trump.

Even more troubling, only an hour ago, President Trump agreed to freeze joint military exercises with South Korea—a legal activity—in exchange for the mere hope that North Korea will freeze its illegal nuclear testing regime. Alarming, President Trump called our military exercises with South Korea provocations. That is

something North Korea would say, not South Korea or the United States.

Again, it seems the President has undercut our foreign policy by drawing a false equivalency between joint military exercises with our allies and the nuclear testing of a rogue regime.

Ultimately, if this is the result, it will have failed President Trump's own standard. The President has said that "if North Korea doesn't denuclearize, that will not be acceptable." President Trump has not made much progress toward that goal yet and has given up substantial leverage already: the leverage of joint military exercises and the leverage of an audience with the President of the United States.

Imagine for a moment if a Democratic President had gone to North Korea in similar circumstances and came away with little more than a handshake and a photo op. Imagine if a Democratic President had placed the flag of the United States next to the flag of North Korea and met a dictator on equal terms. The commentators of the rightwing media and, in fact, the entire Republican Party would be shouting grave warnings about the end of American leadership and the belittling of our country, about selling out and appeasement.

We Democrats do not see it this way. We remain supportive of American diplomatic efforts, in general, but are focused on significant, substantive concerns with President Trump's preliminary arrangement with North Korea. We want to see these efforts succeed and ensure that what has just transpired was not purely a reality show summit.

Here in the Senate, we Democrats believe that means five things. First, North Korea must dismantle or remove every single one of its nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Second, North Korea must end the production and enrichment of uranium and plutonium for military purposes and permanently dismantle its nuclear weapons infrastructure. That means test sites, all nuclear weapons research and development facilities, and enrichment facilities all have to be destroyed. Third, North Korea must continue to suspend all ballistic missile tests. Fourth, North Korea must commit to anytime, anywhere inspections for both its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, including all nondeclared suspicious sites. If inspectors reveal any violation, we must be permitted to implement snapback sanctions. Lastly, any agreement between the United States and North Korea must be permanent.

Let us hope this is not the final chapter in diplomacy with Pyongyang. President Trump and his team must take stock in what has happened, what North Korea has achieved, and what we have yet to achieve and pursue again a tougher course. For the sake of our national security, our interests abroad, and the safety of the American people, the United States can settle for no less than the certifiable, permanent denuclearization of North Korea.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mrs. ERNST. Madam President, I come to the floor to make amendment No. 2400 pending, but it is my understanding that we are almost at an agreement on the hotline.

This bill has cleared committee by voice vote and by my colleagues on the Republican side by the hotline. However, my minority counterparts have had months to look at this bill, but it has remained held up on the hotline. The bill passed the House with unanimous support and has been included in the House's NDAA bill. I call on my colleagues across the aisle to clear this bill or else I will fight for a vote on it in the NDAA.

My legislation, the Presidential Allowance Modernization Act, would establish a cap on former Presidents' monetary allowances, which are currently unlimited and fund resources like office space, staff salaries, cell phone bills, and more. It would then reduce the allowance, dollar-for-dollar, by each dollar of income a former President earns in excess of \$400,000.

The national debt is over \$20 trillion. We cannot afford to generously subsidize the perks of former Presidents to the tune of millions of dollars. The reality is that post-Presidential life already provides fruitful opportunities on its own, with former Presidents raking in tens of millions of dollars from book deals, speaking engagements, and more.

Again, I call on my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill, which would save taxpayer dollars that could be used for more worthwhile causes, like our military. I also thank the senior Senator from Missouri for cosponsoring this legislation and making it a bipartisan bill.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for their hard work in presenting this bill, but I am going to cast a very strong "no" vote on this legislation. This morning I want to say a few words about why I am voting no, to talk about the number of amendments I have submitted to this bill, and to express my very serious concerns about our Nation's bloated military budget, particularly in light of the many unmet needs we face as a nation.

Also, I must express a very serious objection to the fact that we are dealing with a \$716 billion piece of legislation that is more than half of the discretionary budget, yet we will in all likelihood not have a process that allows for amendments to be debated—\$716 billion, at a time when, in Louisiana, as I understand it, they are now going to be cutting food stamps for hungry children, when schools throughout this country don't have enough money for books or for teachers' salaries. We are talking about a \$716 billion military budget and this process, as I understand it, will allow for no amendments, despite the fact that virtually every Member of the Senate has concerns about this bill.

Over and over again I have heard my Republican colleagues and a number of Democratic colleagues come to the floor and talk about a very serious issue, and that is the \$21 trillion national debt we are leaving our kids and our grandchildren. But somehow, when it comes to giving huge tax breaks—\$1 trillion dollars in tax breaks to the top 1 percent—suddenly we don't hear much about that national debt. When it comes to spending \$716 billion on a defense bill, my Republican friends are mute. Suddenly the debt has disappeared because it is OK to spend unlimited sums of money on the military.

I have heard my Republican colleagues tell us that the United States just cannot afford to join the rest of the industrialized world—every other major country—and guarantee healthcare for all of our people as a right to a Medicare for All program. It is what the American people want, but I am told we cannot afford that. We can afford \$716 billion in 1 year for the military, but healthcare for our children, for our working people, for the 30 million people who have no health insurance, and for the tens of millions of people who cannot afford health insurance—that we cannot afford.

At the moment that we are engaged in a highly competitive global economy, I am told over and over again that we cannot afford to make public colleges and universities tuition-free. Hundreds of thousands of our young people are unable to go to college because their families lack the income. Millions leave school deeply in debt. No, no, no, we cannot afford to make public colleges and universities tuition-free, but we can afford to spend \$716 billion in 1 year on the military.

Over half of older Americans have no retirement savings—no retirement savings—yet we have Republican colleagues in the House and here in the Senate who say: Oh, we can't afford Social Security. We have to cut Social Security for people who are trying to get by on \$12,000, \$13,000, \$14,000 a year, cutting their prescription drugs in half. Cut Social Security, yes, but think about dealing with the \$716 billion military budget in a rational way? No, no, no, we can't afford to do that. We can't even afford to accept amendments here on the floor.

The time is long overdue for us to take a hard look at the enormous amount of waste, cost overruns, fraud, and financial mismanagement that has plagued the Department of Defense for decades.

I have heard many of my Republican colleagues worry that low-income people are taking advantage of this program or that program. Do you know where the money is? The money is with the Department of Defense, and it may be time that we take a hard look at the fraud and the financial mismanagement that exists there. That is why I am offering a bipartisan amendment. I want to thank Senators GRASSLEY and LEE for their support on this amendment to end the absurdity of the Department of Defense being the only Federal agency that has not undergone an audit.

It will not surprise the Presiding Officer to note that according to a Gallup poll in February, a few months ago, 65 percent of the American people oppose spending more money on the Department of Defense; 65 percent say that we should not spend more money, yet over a 2-year period, we are going to spend some \$165 billion more on the defense.

So it shouldn't shock anyone that what happens here is a direct contradiction to what the American people want. The American people want healthcare for all; my Republican colleagues want to throw 30 million people off of health insurance. The American people want to ask the rich and powerful to pay more in taxes; our Republican colleagues give massive tax breaks to the top 1 percent.

In defense spending, it is just the same thing. The American people say: I can't afford to send my kids to college, I can't afford childcare, and I can't afford housing. We need help. But nobody listens to that. We don't have lobbyists here fighting for working families so they can find affordable housing or affordable prescription drugs, but today we are listening to the military industrial complex and talking about a \$165 billion increase in 2 years for the military.

As a point in comparison—and I hope everyone hears this—the increase in military spending, the \$165 billion over 2 years that we recently approved is larger than the entire military budget of China. China spends about \$150 billion a year on defense. We have increased military spending by \$165 billion over 2 years.

Russia spends about \$61 billion on defense annually. So children in Louisiana may be losing their food stamps and go hungry, but we are voting on a bill of \$716 billion at a time when Russia spends about of \$61 billion on defense.

There are enormous needs in this country in Vermont, in California, and all across this country. We might want to listen to the needs of working people rather than just lobbyists from the military industrial complex.

I believe in a strong national defense, but we cannot continue to give the

Pentagon and defense contractors like Lockheed Martin a blank check while we ignore the basic needs of working families throughout this country. What this debate should be about—and, unfortunately, it will not be about—is our national priorities.

Do we have to spend more money on defense than the next 10 countries combined when children in America go hungry, when veterans sleep out on the street, when we are the only major country that does not guarantee healthcare to all people? I say no, and I say that the time is long overdue for us to stand up to the lobbyists and the military industrial complex and fight for rational national priorities.

About half of the Pentagon's \$716 billion budget goes directly into the hands of private contractors, not into the hands of our troops. Let's be clear. Over the past two decades, virtually every major defense contractor in the United States has paid millions of dollars in fines and settlements for misconduct and fraud, all—at the same time—while making huge profits on government contracts.

Since 1995, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and United Technologies have paid nearly \$3 billion in fines or related settlements for fraud or misconduct—\$3 billion—at a time when oversight, frankly, is pretty weak. Yet those three companies alone received about \$800 billion in defense contracts over the past 18 years.

One of the amendments I have filed would simply require the Pentagon to establish a website on defense contract fraud with a list of companies convicted of defrauding the Federal Government, the total value of contracts awarded to such companies, and a list of recommendations for ways the Pentagon can penalize fraudulent contractors. My guess is that fraud is a way of doing business and these settlements are simply a cost of doing business for companies who have huge contracts with the Department of Defense. That has to stop.

Further, I find it interesting that the very same defense contractors that have been found guilty or reached settlements for fraud are also paying their CEOs and executives excessive and obscene compensation packages. Last year, the CEO of Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, two of the top U.S. defense contractors, were each paid over \$20 million in total compensation. Moreover, more than 90 percent of the revenue of those companies came from defense spending. So they get the bulk of their money from the taxpayers of the United States, and then they pay their CEOs exorbitant compensation packages.

I think the American people might like to know why a defense contractor can pay its CEO 100 times more than the Secretary of Defense, whose salary is capped at \$205,000. To my mind, that is a reasonable question. How does the CEO of a defense contractor get 100 times more salary than the Secretary

of Defense? That is why I have filed an amendment to prohibit defense contractor CEOs from making more money than the Secretary of Defense.

Moreover, as the GAO has told us, there are massive cost overruns in the Defense Department's acquisition budget that we have to address. According to the GAO, the Pentagon's \$1.66 trillion acquisition portfolio currently suffers from more than \$537 billion in cost overruns, with much of the cost growth taking place after production.

I was the mayor of the city of Burlington, VT, for 8 years. Like other mayors throughout the country—Democrats, Republicans, Independents, whatever—you sit down and negotiate a contract with someone who perhaps is going to repave the streets. The contractor says: "I'm going to do it for \$5 million," and you sign a contract. You don't accept the fact that the contractor comes back and says: Oh, I am sorry, I made a little mistake. It is going to cost you people \$10 million.

That is not the way it was done in Burlington. That is not the way it is done in cities or States throughout this country. But apparently that is the way it is done at the Department of Defense.

Oh, yes, Mr. Secretary, we are going to do this weapons system for \$5 billion. We made a mistake; you have to pay us \$10 billion.

No problem. No worries. Nobody in Congress is going to raise any issue about that.

GAO tells us that "many DOD programs fall short of cost, schedule, and performance expectations, meaning DOD pays more than anticipated, can buy less than expected, and, in some cases, delivers less capability to the warfighter." That is not from BERNIE SANDERS; that is from the GAO.

Let me repeat. A major reason there is so much waste, fraud, and abuse at the Pentagon is that the Department of Defense remains the only Federal agency in America that hasn't been able to pass an independent audit 28 years after Congress required it to do so. I know the Federal bureaucracy moves slowly, but 28 years should be enough time for the DOD to do what Congress demanded that it do.

The amendment Senator GRASSLEY, Senator LEE, and I have filed couldn't be simpler. It simply says that if the Pentagon can't pass a clean audit by fiscal year 2022—not tomorrow; fiscal year 2022—then a small portion of the defense budget—about \$100 million—will be redirected to deficit reduction.

Interestingly, you may recall that on September 10, 2001—1 day before 9/11—former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who was George W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, said:

Our financial systems are decades old. According to some estimates, we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions. We cannot share information from floor to floor in this building because it's stored on dozens of technological systems that are inaccessible or incompatible.

In 2001, Donald Rumsfeld, George Bush's Secretary of Defense, said that DOD could not track \$2.3 trillion in transactions. Yet, 17 years after Mr. Rumsfeld's comments, the Department of Defense has still not passed a clean audit, despite the fact that the Pentagon controls assets in excess of \$2.2 trillion, or roughly 70 percent of what the entire Federal Government owns.

The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan concluded in 2011 that \$31 to \$60 billion spent in Iraq and Afghanistan had been lost to fraud and waste. Children in America go hungry. Young people leave school deeply in debt. People in this country cannot afford healthcare. But \$31 to \$60 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan has been lost through fraud and waste. Maybe—just maybe—we might want to get our priorities right and take a look at that issue.

Separately, in 2015, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction reported that the Pentagon could not account for \$45 billion in funding for reconstruction projects. More recently, an audit conducted by Ernst & Young for the Defense Logistics Agency found that it could not properly account for \$800 million in construction projects.

It is time to hold the Department of Defense to the same level of accountability as the rest of the government.

I would also like to briefly mention an amendment that, to me, makes an enormous amount of sense. In this bill, we are spending \$716 billion in defense spending in order to protect the American people. What this bill does is spend that money on the production of fighter planes, bombs, guns, missiles, tanks, nuclear weapons, submarines, and other weapons of destruction. This amendment I have submitted would reduce the defense budget by one-tenth of 1 percent. That is not a massive cut. We would use that \$700 million to make our country safer by reaching out to people throughout the world in ways that bring us together through educational and cultural programs.

At the end of the day, it is not necessarily true that guns and tanks and missiles are the only way we will be safe. We will be safer when people throughout the world get to know each other and understand the common humanity that they have, when kids from Iran and Burlington, VT, can sit down and talk about the issues they face.

This amendment is about helping to make us safer by investing in educational programs, allowing our kids to go abroad to learn about other countries, and allowing kids from other countries to come into the United States. Dialogue alone taking place between Foreign Ministers or diplomats at the United Nations is not the only way countries can relate to each other. That type of dialogue, that type of communication, that type of sharing of who we are should be taking place between people throughout the world at the grassroots level—among young peo-

ple, among older people, among working people, among academics.

Let's try to destroy the hatred that exists throughout the world based on fear and ignorance by allowing people to get to know each other. One-tenth of 1 percent would go toward that effort.

On a separate note, since March of 2015, the U.S. Armed Forces have been involved in hostilities between a Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis in Yemen. I believe it is long past time that we put an end to our unconstitutional and unauthorized participation in this war. To my mind, there is no question that U.S. participation in the war in Yemen is unauthorized and unconstitutional. It is the Congress of the United States that decides whether this country goes to war, not the President.

The truth about Yemen is that U.S. forces have been actively engaged in support of the Saudi coalition in this war, providing intelligence and aerial refueling of planes whose bombs have killed thousands of people and made the current humanitarian crisis in Yemen the worst humanitarian crisis on the face of the planet today.

Even now as I speak, there are reports that an attack on the Yemeni port city of Hodeidah by the Saudi-led coalition is imminent. Hodeidah is a key entry point for humanitarian aid into Yemen. The U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator in the country, Lisa Grande, said last week that "a military attack or siege on Hodeidah will impact hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. . . . In a prolonged worst case, we fear that as many as 250,000 people may lose everything—even their lives."

The Trump administration has tried to justify our involvement in the Yemen war as necessary to push back on Iran. Well, another administration told us that invading Iraq was necessary to confront al-Qaida, and another told us that the Vietnam war was necessary to contain communism. None of that turned out to be true.

I believe that we have become far too comfortable with the United States engaging in military interventions all over the world. We have now been in Afghanistan for 17 years—the longest war in American history. We have been in Iraq for 15 years. Our troops are now in Syria under what I believe are questionable authorities, and the administration has indicated that it may broaden that mission even more.

The time is long overdue for Congress to reassert its constitutional responsibility over sending our men and women into war. It is the Congress that makes that decision. It couldn't be clearer in the Constitution. It is not the President of the United States. That is why I have filed a bipartisan amendment, along with Senators LEE, MURPHY, WARREN, and several others, that would put an end to U.S. involvement in the war in Yemen.

Let me conclude by saying this: I think everybody in the Congress believes and understands that we need a

strong defense. There is no debate about that. But we do not need a defense budget that is bloated, that is wasteful, and that has in it many areas of fraud.

Let me remind some of my Republican colleagues—it is hard to believe, but Dwight D. Eisenhower, who led American troops in World War II, was a Republican. This is what he said as he was leaving office, which is as true today as when he said it in 1960. He said:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. . . . This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

That is what Dwight D. Eisenhower said way back when. Those are words that I think we should remember today.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I would suggest that the War Powers Act does specifically say that the President has the very power to enter our troops into combat. It shouldn't be necessary to say.

People are asking me questions and calling up and asking: Where are we on the NDAA? I want to make a few comments about that and then give an exact status as to where we are right now.

We said it before, but we can't overstate this: This NDAA bill is going to pass. We know it is going to pass. It has passed for 57 consecutive years, and it is one that has to pass because this is the most important bill of the year.

Last night, we adopted a managers' package of some 45 bipartisan amendments. This is on top of some 300 amendments that we already have gone through in the committee.

I want to say with my counterpart here—Senator REED—that we are in total agreement on the procedures we should be following. We are in agreement on an open amendment process. Both the Democratic and Republican leadership are committed to an open amendment process. We have been trying to set that up, and we have not been shortchanging or shortcutting anyone's ability to be heard on their amendment, because we have already gone through 300 of these in committee, and then it passed unanimously to the floor. That is something that doesn't happen very often.

I hope that we can have more amendments throughout this process. We are working to get consent to do that. I think we can make it happen. We want an open amendment process. Everybody wants that.

I recently got back from visiting with American troops around the

world—Afghanistan, Poland, Kuwait, just to name a few. When I meet with these troops, I go and talk to the enlisted guys in the mess hall. You can find out a lot more by sitting down and eating with the guys in the mess hall in Afghanistan than you can having a hearing in Washington, DC. One of the things I learned last week was that our troops want to know if we are really doing all we can.

The proper authorizations, reports, trainings, things like we established in this bill would be improved by an open amendment process. The open amendment process is the hallmark of our democracy. It is very significant, and it is something we need to be doing, and we are all in agreement on that.

Now, the NDAA is also a message to our allies around the world. They don't want to have to hedge their bets. It wasn't too long ago we were in the South China Sea, and we saw where China is actually building all of these islands out there. I contend, it is illegally building them because they don't own the land. It is almost as if they are preparing for World War III. All of that is going on right now. So it is a very hostile world out there.

We saw the progress the President made yesterday with Kim Jong Un. That was nothing short of a miracle that they are sitting down and visiting, that they have agreed on certain denuclearization prospects. I think they have done a great job, and I am anxious to give this President the authority to continue in his work.

While we continue to work out the amendment process, I ask my colleagues to come down to the floor.

Let me say where we are right now. Senator CORKER is blocking the consideration of all amendments, unless he receives a vote on his amendment. I appreciate very much the friendly attitude he has had toward this. He feels very strongly, but there is a blue-slip problem with this; that is, it is not going to be considered by the House because it is a revenue issue we are dealing with, and that is why it is a blue-slip issue. I know Senator CORKER did want to correct that last night, and he attempted to do it. I have not heard that he has been able to successfully do it, and I don't believe he has.

There are several already who have said, in the event CORKER tries to bring it up for a vote, they will block that vote. So that vote would be blocked.

Senator PAUL and Senator LEE have amendments that are similar to each other. Each one is blocking unless he receives a vote. So we have Senator LEE saying, unless he gets a vote on his amendment, he is going to block anyone else from having an amendment or getting a vote; in other words, no amendments. Senator PAUL, the same thing, no amendments. Now, their amendments are similar to each other, but there are some slight differences, but that is where they are right now.

However, Senator GRAHAM and Senator GRASSLEY have said, in the event

Senator Paul or Senator LEE puts their amendment forward, they would stop their amendments from coming up. So that is where we are. We have the Corker amendment, and it is one that has a blue-slip problem. We have the indefinite detention amendment by PAUL, and both GRAHAM and GRASSLEY have said they would object if that comes up for a vote. So we can't have a vote on that. There is nothing we can do except get them together to decide.

This significant bill we are talking about is the most significant bill of the year, and we can't move on it until—and, I agree, there is a problem. I have talked to a lot of our Members who are fairly new Members, and they talk about the Senate process and that one person can stop everything from happening. Well, it has been that way a long time, and this is where we seem to have to pay dearly for it. I have to say this also because many times on legislation we have on the floor, it is Democrat versus Republican, Republican versus Democrat. Well, Senator REED and I don't have any disagreement. We disagree on some of the issues we are going to be dealing with as we debate amendments—and that is going to happen this week—but we both agree the other has the chance to present his best case and try to win on the issues.

So that is going on, and this is one of the rare cases where I guess all the problems we are having objecting to amendments are all coming from the Republican side. I hope our Republicans will get together with each other and determine what areas they actually will be objecting to. That is where we are right now.

Let me, one more time, commend Senator REED for the cooperation we are getting between the Democrats and Republicans on this, the most significant bill of the year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me thank the Senator from Oklahoma for being very thoughtful and informing us all of the current procedural status. We both hope to be able to work through another package of managers' amendments that could be submitted.

Looking at the amendments we have seen so far, regardless of what position you take on their disposition, they all seem to be serious, substantive and, in our view, worthy of a vote. We just have to work out the procedure to get to those votes. There may be something in the future that is offered that seems to be very difficult, and I will not say we have not, in the past, on our side stood up and said we object. That is one of the prerogatives.

At this juncture, Senator INHOFE and I seem to be in harmony trying to find ways to vote for the proposals we have seen presented to us and ask and request votes on the proposals by our colleagues.

With that, I know Senator INHOFE and I will continue to work to see if we can move this process forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to raise my concerns over the outcome of the summit between the United States and North Korea.

Now, after witnessing heated rhetoric from both sides, the unexpected turn toward diplomacy by President Trump and Kim Jong Un was, by all accounts, a very welcome development. As there is no military solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis, I was encouraged to see direct engagement, and I have long advocated for this approach. However, I am concerned that the agreement signed this morning does little to address the threats and challenges we face.

First, the text of the statement was the most vague and least detailed of any signed by North Korea over the past three decades. Despite his claims to the contrary, President Trump got a weaker deal, with fewer commitments, than any of his predecessors. Nowhere does the document explain what “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” means. For example, Kim Jong Un can easily interpret the language to mean he will only relinquish his nuclear weapons once the United States does the same. After all, history shows us that North Korea interprets the term “Korean Peninsula” to include any U.S. nuclear weapon capable of striking North Korea. The loopholes in the agreement, it seems, are big enough to fly nuclear missiles through.

By contrast, previous agreements were much more stringent. The 1992 joint declaration signed by North and South Korea, for example, included conditions such as “South and North Korea shall not test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons,” and “South and North Korea shall not possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities.” Unfortunately, neither of those commitments appears in the latest agreement. The language instead suggests something worrying.

As the administration must have realized this agreement was not as strong as the previous ones, it appears it was unable to convince North Korea to adopt tougher, more detailed commitments. If true, we should take the hint that North Korea has not yet felt the economic pressure necessary to compel it to accept our definition of “denuclearization”—one where the Kim regime relinquishes its nuclear weapons and its means to produce more.

It appears, Kim Jong Un, having stockpiled a wide range of illicit and dangerous weapons, believes he is negotiating from a position of strength, rather than from a position of weakness. While the Trump administration said it has imposed maximum pressure, the truth is, we haven't yet reached that level that could be called maximum pressure.

North Korea must understand that even if China eases the pressure, we in Congress are ready to step in to tighten the screws on the North Korean economy.

President Trump appears to have made a second unforced error. By agreeing to curtail our joint military exercises with the South Koreans, President Trump let Kim Jong Un dictate our military activities with other countries. By proclaiming that our exercises are “provocative,” he has adopted the North Korea propaganda. By proclaiming that our exercises are “expensive,” he showed that he does not grasp our alliance commitments. Yes, some military exercises are costly, but as any businessperson should know, the more important indicator is value. If a high cost is outweighed by even greater benefits, then we should be willing to pay the cost.

Our military exercises improve the readiness of our forces to deter and, if necessary, defeat North Korean aggression. Will North Korea be sufficiently deterred without U.S. and South Korean forces standing shoulder to shoulder? Will the chance of conflict decrease?

It was telling—and very regrettable—that the South Korean Government needed to issue a statement asking the Trump administration to clarify its comment about military exercises. It seems the Blue House in South Korea was not consulted.

What signal does it send to China that our presence in the region, which has helped keep peace and stability for decades, may be sacrificed to save a bit of money? The Trump administration might have unwittingly given a green light to China to pursue more aggressive actions in the region.

Now, I have been warning that we must watch out for the old Kim family playbook—one that has been used throughout the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. Well, the Kim family playbook was on the field yet again last night, and President Trump fell for all of the plays.

As it has done in the past, North Korea showed it is trying to, No. 1, front load the rewards and delay concessions. As indicated by the post-summit statement from China's Foreign Ministry, Pyongyang and Beijing already appear to be working together to remove sanctions despite the lack of tangible evidence of denuclearization.

No. 2, from the Kim family playbook, use sleight of hand to make irrelevant actions seem meaningful. By supposedly demolishing its nuclear test site and a missile engine test stand, North Korea is claiming it has made real progress, despite not destroying a single warhead or missile.

No. 3, in the Kim family playbook, exploit ambiguity. The Trump-Kim agreement is so vague that it imposes no clear requirements on North Korea. What we should want is reconciliation, not repetition of what has happened decade after decade when the Kim fam-

ily uses its playbook to delay concessions they make while front-end loading the rewards they receive.

We can all agree that we need a plan to stop North Korea's plutonium production and uranium enrichment, that suspends and then eliminates its ballistic missile program, that permanently dismantles and removes all of its nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and that implements a compliance inspection program with a strong verification regime—suspend, eliminate, dismantle, remove, and verify every single step of the way.

Most of us agree on what a deal should look like, but the trick is figuring out how to get there, and the hard work lies ahead to successfully navigate the hazards.

No. 1, do not sell out our allies. We must not allow North Korea to believe the alliance framework, which has served as the foundation for regional peace and security, is anything other than unshakeable. Unfortunately, South Korea seemed to be caught off guard by President Trump's announcement on military exercises.

No. 2, do not prematurely release the pressure valve. China, North Korea's chief enabler, already is easing pressure on North Korea. North Korean goods already are becoming more abundant in China, despite being banned by United Nations Security Council resolutions, and immediately following the summit, the Chinese Foreign Ministry suggested making adjustments to existing sanctions on North Korea.

If China wants to be taken seriously as a responsible global power, it cannot shirk its duties to enforce sanctions on serial violators like North Korea. If North Korea backslides at any point, China must be tougher on North Korea, including cutting off all of the crude oil exports to the North Korean regime, which still flows in every day from China.

No. 3, focus on the threat at hand. North Korea's nuclear warheads and other dangerous weapons and their delivery systems are real threats. The administration must not fall for North Korea's inevitable theatrics and false concessions, as we cannot afford to be sidetracked. After all, nothing would stop North Korea from conducting another nuclear or missile test if it even believes its warheads and missiles need more testing.

No. 4, build American diplomatic capability and infrastructure. Diplomacy is a team sport, and no matter what commitments leaders make, it is only through a well-staffed and well-resourced professional diplomatic core that it becomes a reality. The State Department must have the resources it needs to conduct American foreign policy around the globe and especially with regard to Asia and North Korea.

The outcome of this summit clearly indicates how much we need the advice of career diplomats and technical experts.

And, No. 5, come to Congress. To achieve a lasting solution to the crisis,

the Trump administration must work with Congress to shape the contours of any future deal. Any final agreement should take the form of a treaty, to be ratified by the U.S. Senate, so as to increase its shelf life.

Without following principles like this and without a clear understanding of our previous diplomatic efforts with North Korea, we could fail. We owe it to our fellow Americans to successfully reduce the threats we face because the threats from North Korea are significant.

Unlike other countries with nuclear programs, North Korea already possesses thermonuclear warheads and the ballistic missiles to deliver them. It has shorter range missiles that cast a dark shadow over our allies, South Korea and Japan. Pyongyang possesses some of the foulest toxins on the planet, and it brutally represses, imprisons, tortures, and kills its own citizens. So we must address these myriad threats.

As it turns out, negotiating with North Korea is harder than the President thought. So we must continue to squeeze the regime so that it cannot access the resources necessary to maintain or expand its military capabilities. After all, a combination of direct engagement, backed by pressure, is the only solution to the North Korean threat to the United States, our allies, and to the broader region.

Now, Mr. President, I would like to spend a few minutes discussing amendments that I am filing to the National Defense Authorization Act. My amendments would help to reduce the nuclear dangers the world faces today and in the future by either canceling or redirecting funds the Trump administration would use to develop a new so-called low-yield nuclear weapon toward preparing for nonproliferation activities that will be essential to helping denuclearize North Korea.

I also want to thank my colleagues Senators ELIZABETH WARREN and JACK REED, who have been tremendous leaders on the Armed Services Committee, in working to ensure that proper congressional authorization is secured for any new or modified nuclear weapons. There is no more important job for Congress than stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, and I thank Senators WARREN and REED for their leadership and commitment to this important task.

Let's be clear. When the Trump administration talks about a so-called low-yield nuclear weapon, they are still referring to nuclear weapons comparable to the nuclear bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in the Second World War. There is no such thing as a low-yield nuclear weapon. A nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon, and they are fundamentally different than any other tool of war. They destabilize. They annihilate. They force others to do the same. This is where the term "MAD," or mutually assured destruction, comes from.

For these reasons, they should never be used, and we should never falter in

the ongoing struggle to reduce and eventually eliminate the danger nuclear weapons pose to the world.

But, instead, the Trump administration wants new nuclear weapons, and, unfortunately, its efforts to develop new, more usable low-yield nuclear weapons, like the W76-2, seem to be driven more by political requirements than by military requirements. Our military commanders didn't ask for this or any other nuclear weapon. Instead, the Trump administration told them that they were getting this new low-yield nuclear weapon in its Nuclear Posture Review earlier this year, which needlessly expanded our nuclear warfighting capabilities and threatened new scenarios under which we might use our nuclear weapons to respond. The Nuclear Posture Review called for new low-yield weapons, like the W76-2, for unretiring old, Cold War-era ones like the B-83 megaton gravity bomb and expanding the scenarios under which we might respond with nuclear weapons.

We already have hundreds of low-yield nuclear weapons, including the B61 gravity bomb and an air-launched cruise missile, and we will spend hundreds of billions of dollars to upgrade these systems, as well as to develop a new stealth bomber and fighter aircraft to deliver them, as part of the existing nuclear modernization program.

Given this current capacity, as well as the lack of any documents, reports, or studies justifying the sudden, previously unrecognized, need for a new low-yield weapon as part of America's nuclear deterrent, it is hard to understand why we need to spend more money to develop a low-yield nuclear weapon that will add additional strain to a nuclear complex that is already operating at levels unseen since the Cold War and that could jeopardize the existing modernization program which enjoys bipartisan support and which our military leaders have said is the most important nuclear requirement for the military. It makes no sense to spend more money to develop a low-yield nuclear weapon, dangerously indistinguishable from a strategic one, especially when our military does not need it. They did not request it.

That is why I have fought this weapon from the very start and am offering an amendment to focus on funding activities that will be necessary to reduce the nuclear danger to the world—whether now or in the future—instead of adding to it by developing a completely unjustified low-yield weapon that adds to the risk that we can actually contemplate fighting a winnable nuclear war. That makes no sense whatsoever—a new nuclear weapon that the Pentagon did not ask for. We should be heading in the opposite direction. That is the signal that we should be sending to the rest of the world.

With regard to the summit, my hope is that there will be some details that indicate what the concessions have been made by Kim to the United States

and to the world. Thus far, there is no evidence of that. I fear that the only thing that will last from this summit will be the photo, because we will not have had the concessions made that, on a verifiable basis can, in fact, be confirmed and that make the Korean Peninsula and make the world a safer place to be.

So today is a momentous day. This will be a momentous week on the floor of the Senate, as well, in the debate of this new armed services bill, and I am looking forward to this incredibly important discussion.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONGRATULATING MITCH MCCONNELL AS THE LONGEST SERVING SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I rise today to mark an important milestone for our friend Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, who has now become the longest serving Republican leader, surpassing Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, who served from 1985 to 1996.

I told somebody in the press yesterday that Senator MCCONNELL has done it the old-fashioned way: He earned it. He earned this role as our leader and the respect, certainly, that goes along with it.

He served as minority leader beginning in 2007, and I had the honor of presenting him with a copy of his maiden speech as Republican leader back then. That was at the beginning of the 110th Congress, and he has served as either majority leader or minority leader ever since. What a historic tenure his has been, and what a privilege it has been for me to serve alongside him since I came to the Senate in 2003, but especially in my role as whip, I have had the opportunity to work with the leader on a daily basis, and it has been one of the highlights of my Senate career.

Senator MCCONNELL is trusted. We all know he is whip smart. He is an impressive strategist. He understands the Senate better than anybody else here, and time and again, he has demonstrated what leaders always need to demonstrate, and that is a remarkable degree of humility, sometimes preferring to work for the betterment of the conference and the country behind the scenes rather than enjoy the spotlight on the frontlines. That takes a remarkable sense of self-confidence and team spirit that not everybody has. It is true that sometimes he is soft-spoken, but I can assure you that he is never afraid to take a hard line when absolutely necessary. But more than that, he is a rare example of what a Senator ought to be, what a true public servant ought to be.

As majority leader, Senator McCONNELL is a member of a storied group that includes the likes of Senator Charles Curtis, the first official majority leader of the Senate, who was famous for his Native American ancestry and racing horses, I am told. The group includes Robert Taft of Ohio, who would work late into the night studying the rules of the Senate in order to outmaneuver his opponents. It includes Lyndon Baines Johnson from my State, who would go on to become President, as well as Mike Mansfield from Montana, Johnson's whip, who went on to serve as majority leader for 16 years. In more recent times, there have been great statesmen, such as Bob Dole, Trent Lott, and Bill Frist.

We all know that Senator McCONNELL is an avid student of history, and he has learned a lot from all of these leaders—their example, their ups and downs, their successes, and their challenges—and in a sense, he stands on their shoulders. The experience, the example, and the great leadership each of them demonstrated have benefited all of us but nobody more than our leader Senator McCONNELL.

In today's world, the qualities embodied by all of these men is not very widely understood, but we have to look no further than Senator McCONNELL to see what that leadership looks like. One thing it requires is recognizing your role but also respecting the role of other Members in the conference.

As I said, Senator McCONNELL deeply understands the nature of the Senate and his position, and he illustrated this when he spoke at the beginning of the 114th Congress.

In his first speech, he recognized that the American people were anxious about the direction of our country. He mentioned the decline of civic trust in our national institutions. He expressed concern about his fellow Americans feeling as though government was somehow uninterested or incapable of addressing their concerns—a government that seemed to be working for itself instead of for them. Those were some of the sentiments and concerns he expressed at the time.

Sensing this unease, articulating the problem was just the beginning of Senator McCONNELL's setting out to fix it. What Americans wanted then is what they want now: They want a government that works. They want, as Senator McCONNELL called it, a government of the 21st century, one that functions with efficiency and accountability, competence and purpose. That is the kind of government our leader has worked tirelessly to promote. As he has told us time and again, what he is interested in is results, not show votes. Many of us from time to time have said: Why can't we have a vote on this or that? He reminds us that what we need to produce is results, not theatrics.

He has taken steps to return the Senate to regular order, which simply means getting the Senate back to work according to its own rules and traditions. He has gotten the committees to

work again. The Senate simply does not work unless our committee structured works, because then power is diffused among all Senators, and they each get to contribute their piece of a solution to a problem. He has committed himself and the Senate to a more rational, functioning appropriations process—something we all can applaud.

In my opinion, it has been his never-ending quest for this body he loves to function not just ably but at a consistently high level. That has been his greatest contribution to the people he serves.

Leader McCONNELL is concerned about the policy priorities of our party, of course, and he works doggedly to advance a conservative, right-of-center agenda, but he also cares deeply about this institution that he has committed so much of his life to serving and the pivotal role the Senate has always played in American history. He cares about upholding the rules and traditions of this body, not for their own sake but because they have simply withstood the test of time.

We have made great strides this Congress under Leader McCONNELL's leadership. We passed the first overhaul of the Tax Code in more than three decades and allowed Americans to keep more of their hard-earned paychecks. We reformed Dodd-Frank legislation, freeing up banks and credit unions to better serve their communities by giving small businesses access to the credit they need in order to start that business and grow. We rolled back overly burdensome regulations and confirmed 39 judicial nominees, including a Supreme Court Justice and 21 circuit court judges. As Senator McCONNELL likes to remind us, these judges will serve long after this President's term of office and perhaps even our time in the Senate.

This spring, we kept a solemn commitment we made to our veterans by making sure they have access to the healthcare choices which they need and which we have solemnly committed to provide. None of this would have been possible without Leader McCONNELL's deftly navigating around the stop signs and roadblocks that naturally occur in a place like the Senate and refusing to yield along the way to unprecedented levels of partisan obstruction.

But we must not forget that Senator McCONNELL is a leader not only of our conference, but he also serves primarily on behalf of the people of Kentucky. He doesn't leave his full-time job behind when he puts on his leadership hat. He somehow has to balance the needs of both his constituents in Kentucky and the larger needs of the Senate and of the country as a whole. It goes without saying that balancing those competing demands is extraordinarily difficult. It is not for the faint of heart. But somehow Senator McCONNELL makes it look easy. He doesn't even seem to break a sweat, amazingly so. That is because people like Senator McCONNELL are versatile and energetic.

On behalf of his fellow Kentuckians, he has recently championed the cause

of international adoptions, ensured a healthcare fix for more than 3,000 retired coal miners, and supported military installations, such as Fort Campbell and Fort Knox. He has gotten more resources to strengthen Kentucky universities. He has helped his State combat the scourge of opioid addiction. He even helped a mother get her child back after she was abducted and taken to West Africa. These are just some of the recent ways he has served his State.

As we know, Senator McCONNELL joined the Senate in 1984, so one could literally write volumes about his many other contributions over the past 3½ decades. He once said of the Senate what is no less true of all of us: We are all imperfect at moments, but we were permanently endowed with high purpose.

For those familiar with the story of his own life, this sense of high purpose was seen early on. After overcoming polio at a young age, Leader McCONNELL went on to attend the University of Louisville, where he served as student body president and where he urged his classmates to march with Martin Luther King, Jr., on behalf of civil rights. He then became president of the student bar association in law school. This man was clearly born to lead.

What was clear early in his life remains clear today: Leader McCONNELL is simply relentless. He never stops working, and in his view, we—both as a conference and a country—still have miles to go before we sleep.

In addition to confirming the President's nominees, we have a packed to-do list this year that includes finishing the Defense bill this week, passing water infrastructure reform, as well as a farm bill, combating the opioid crisis, and reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration and the Coast Guard. None of this is easy, but one thing is certain: With Leader McCONNELL at the helm and with the hard work of those of us here in the Senate—on a bipartisan basis, hopefully—we will continue to make steady progress on behalf of the American people we serve.

Thank you, Senator McCONNELL, for your example. Thank you for your mentorship and for your friendship, and congratulations once again on reaching this historic milestone today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, while the Senator from Kentucky is here, I want to get his attention and say that the very laudatory comments the majority whip has said about the Senator—I can add to the accolades for the Senator from Kentucky by pointing out that he and I have a common trait, a common denominator between us: We both married above ourselves. His wife, the Honorable Elaine Chao, now our Secretary of Transportation, former

Secretary of Labor—they are truly one of the remarkable couples of political leadership in the Nation's Capital. I congratulate him on the comments by the majority whip today.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. President, I am wearing this ribbon because the Orlando community is mourning once again. Last night, there was another shooting, and a number of people have been killed again. Today marks 2 years since the tragic massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, 2 years since a gunman walked into the club with a Sig Sauer MCX assault rifle and killed 49 innocent people. They were there celebrating Latin American night at a gay nightclub. It was one of the deadliest mass shootings in modern U.S. history with 49 deaths, only to be eclipsed by the massacre of 58 people a year ago in Las Vegas. In the carnage, a number of people were severely wounded, and those who did not actually have physical wounds have the mental and emotional wounds that are not unlike the PTSD that our soldiers suffer from and have to be treated for for years and years. That is true in the Orlando community as a result of the massacre at the Pulse nightclub. Orlando is mourning again at this 2-year mark.

There were some incredible things that came out of this. I have never seen the Orlando community so united, with the leadership of the entire community, regardless of their politics, wearing these kinds of ribbons to point out their unity and using the phrase "Orlando Strong."

Today is a day to pause and honor the victims and the survivors and to once again thank the first responders who put their lives on the line to save so many more. Law enforcement was magnificent. The SWAT team was magnificent. I talked to the SWAT team. There was one of the SWAT members who actually had stitches across his forehead. But for millimeters, he would have been dead. That was one of the rounds from the assault rifle.

I talked to the trauma team at the Orlando regional hospital. A trauma unit just so happened to be about 10 or 15 blocks from the Pulse nightclub. But for that trauma unit, those trauma surgeons and their courage in trying to get victims stabilized, there would have been more deaths.

This is a day to look back on what we have actually done to prevent another such tragedy from ever happening again. Unfortunately, not much had happened until a bold, very courageous group of students after the massacre in Parkland, FL, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School stood up and said: We are going to make a difference.

The Orlando community is once again mourning today because last night a gunman shot a police officer and then killed four young, innocent children whom he was holding hostage in an apartment. It has happened again. These children, all under the age

of 12—one was just a 1-year-old—were killed by a man who, like so many others, shouldn't have had a gun in the first place. When are we going to say enough is enough?

At some point Congress has to accept the fact that the only way to change the current path is that we, as a society, are going to have to take a step in the right direction to do the right thing. Yet you can remember that a couple of years ago, in this body we tried to pass a bill which said that if you were on the terrorist watch list, it was going to be the law of the land that you could not buy a gun. Mind you, if they are on the terrorist watch list, we think they are potentially a terrorist and therefore cannot get on an airplane and fly on a commercial airline, but we could not pass that to say that they could not buy or acquire a gun.

So what we see that destroys our communities—we are going to have to do more than increase security at schools with some wrongheaded attempts to arm teachers. First of all, the teachers don't want to be armed in schools. I will tell you who else doesn't want them to be armed—the SWAT team that has to storm the school building looking for the shooter, and then if they come upon a teacher with a gun, they could think that teacher is the shooter.

We have to do more than increase funding for mental health or expand background checks, which we desperately have to do. We need universal, comprehensive background checks that would pick up red flags about mental health issues like those of the Parkland shooter. We have to do more than raise the minimum age to buy a gun or ban the sale of bump stocks, which makes a semiautomatic assault rifle into an automatic—a true military weapon.

At some point, Congress has to start standing up for the people it represents. It has to turn a deaf ear to the special interests that have locked down their votes here because they want to sell more guns. At some point, Congress has to stand up to the NRA, which represents the gun manufacturers—not the target shooters, not the hunters. It represents the gun manufacturers to sell more guns.

I say this as a fellow who grew up on a ranch. I have had guns all of my life and have hunted all my life. I still hunt with my son. An assault rifle like an AR-15 is not for hunting; it is for killing. We have to face the fact of banning the sale of military assault rifle types and the long clips of some 30 rounds of ammunition.

The attack at the Pulse nightclub 2 years ago was an attack of both terror and hate, and it was an attack on our fundamental American values of dignity and equality. It was an attack designed to divide us as a nation, but what we saw instead was an entire community and entire country come together united.

In remembrance of the victims today in Orlando, you will see this ribbon worn by many, many citizens in the community. On the 2-year date of that horrific event, I want us to come together again in the same way we did after Pulse in Orlando, the same way we did after Parkland but, this time, not to help each other mourn to get through the tragedy but to require real change to make sure that it is going to be more difficult for this to happen again.

Aren't people beginning to realize there is way too much gun violence in this country—and a lot of it since Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut? In my State of Florida, just this year, we have seen 17 students gunned down at Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Just in this year, 1 month after that, we saw another student shot at Forest High School in Ocala. Just last month, a sheriff's deputy was shot and killed in Lake Placid. Then, this week, we have awakened to the news of an officer shot in Orlando and the deaths of four young children who were held hostage.

We should not allow these shootings to become the new normal in this country. This Senator has been involved in a lot of bipartisan bills to prohibit known or suspected terrorists from purchasing firearms, to empower our family members and law enforcement to take guns away from relatives who pose a danger to themselves and others who bring up these so-called red flags. These are sensible, bipartisan options to help make our communities safer, yet there has been little movement in the Senate to proceed on these proposals.

The student leaders of the March For Our Lives organization have said it. The parents of the children at Sandy Hook have said it. Those who have lost loved ones to suicide have said it. Two years after Pulse, our resolve to end gun violence must be stronger than ever. It is time for us to act. We realize that with practical politics, it is going to be very, very difficult to move legislation, but we have to keep trying.

Let's work on some real bipartisan, commonsense solutions to make our communities safer. Let's work on how we can prevent these assault weapons from getting into the wrong hands. Let's work together on how we can stop massacres that continue to plague this country. We owe it to the victims of the massacres and to their families. We owe it to every American, who has the right to live without being in fear of this violence. Just ask the students in the schools of America today if they fear that violence.

Really, isn't enough enough?

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.